Planning Series

Obatanga Provincial Park

Preliminary Management Plan

Ontario

Ministry of Natural Resources

Hon. Vincent G. Kerrio
Minister

Mary Mogford
Deputy Minister

PARK MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERIES

OBATANGA PROVINCIAL PARK

PRELIMINARY MANAGEMENT PLAN

ISBN 0-7729-1262-9

C 1986 Government of Ontario

Additional copies of this publication can be obtained from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Wawa District Office, P.O. Box 1160, 22 Mission Road, Wawa, Ontario, P0S 1K0, telephone: (705) 856-2396; or from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Northeastern Regional Office, 199 Larch Street, Sudbury, Ontario, P3E 5P9, telephone: (705) 675-4140.

FOREWORD

I am pleased to release this preliminary management plan for Obatanga Provincial Park. It is a statement of policy for the protection, management and development of park resources. It also provides guidance for the preparation of plans for resources management, client services and development to implement park policies and achieve park objectives.

I encourage you to read this plan and give us your views. Talk to my staff in the Wawa District Office or forward your comments to the District Manager, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 1160, Wawa, Ontario, POS 1KO

Your participation will assist us in refining this plan leading to the preparation of an approved park management plan for Obatanga Provincial Park.

Thank you.

M.A. Klugman
Regional Director
Northeastern Region

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD ..... (i)

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... (ii)

1. THE PARK 1

2. PARK POLICIES 1

2.1 CLASSIFICATION 1
2.2 GOAL 1
2.3 OBJECTIVES 1
2.4 ZONING 2

3. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT 3

3.1 WATER 3
3.2 VEGETATION 3
3.3 FISHERIES 4
3.4 WILDLIFE 4

4. CLIENT SERVICES 4

4.1 VISITOR SERVICES 4
4.2 MARKETING 5
4.3 BACKCOUNTRY RECREATION 5

5. DEVELOPMENT 5

5.1 CAMPING 5
5.2 DAY USE 5
5.3 BACKCOUNTRY USE 5
5.4 OFFICE AND MAINTENANCE CENTRE 5

6. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW 6

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES 6
6.2 PLAN REVIEW 6

SELECT REFERENCES 7

1. THE PARK

Obatanga Provincial Park is located on Highway 17, 56 km west of Wawa and 37 km east of White River. The park area is 9 413 ha. (Figure 1).

The park was opened in 1962 just after Highway 17 was completed around the north shore of Lake Superior. The park area was put into regulations in 1967 (O. Reg. 245/67).

This Natural Environment classed park has a landscape that varies from flat sand plains in the northeast to rugged bedrock hills in the south part of the park. Lakes and wetlands are scattered throughout the park area.

Park development includes 132 campsites (20 with electrical outlets), a comfort station and a day-use area in a mature stand of jack pine on Burnfield Lake.

The majority of the park is an undeveloped area of small lakes, creeks and boreal forest - ideal for canoeing and fishing.

The attraction of the park is the close proximity to highway 17, the campground facilities and the natural features such as jackpine stands, small lakes and the quiet and peaceful setting.

2. PARK POLICIES

2.1 CLASSIFICATION

Obatanga Provincial Park has been classifed as a Natural Environment classed park because of a combination of low and high intensity activities in a natural setting and the protection of special and representative values.

2.2 PARK GOAL

"To protect and manage the Obatanga Park landscape for high quality recreation and heritage appreciation experiences".

2.3 PARK OBJECTIVES

Protection

"To protect provincially significant natural environments incorporating natural and recreational features."

The park area helps meet the provincial representation target of a Natural Environment park in Site Region 3E/Site District 5. Wetland communities, a chain of lakes suitable for activities like canoeing, a campground situated in a mature jackpine stand, and glacial outwash deposits are examples of significant features protected in the park. These features will be protected through appropriate zoning and management.

Recreation

"To provide an annual supply of 7,900 day use opportunities in an area of recreation potential associated with natural environments".

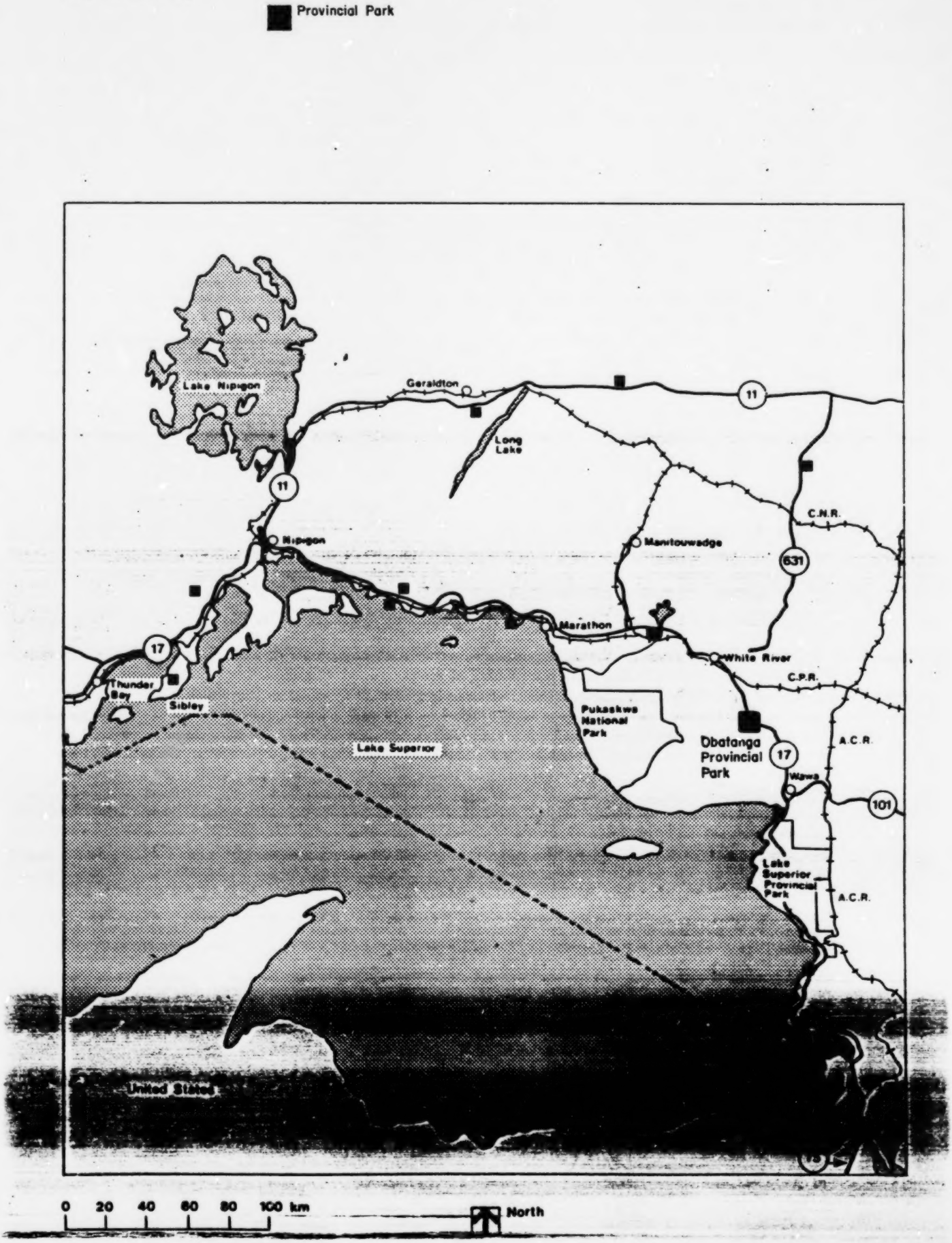
Day use opportunities will be provided through a variety of recreation activities and facilities such as safe swimming area and beach with picnic facilities on Burnfield Lake; boating, canoeing, and fishing on other park lakes; walking trails; and open space play areas.

"To provide an annual supply of 32,200 camping opportunities in natural environments and in associated areas of recreational potential".

Car camping opportunities will be provided in the two campgrounds on Burnfield Lake. The open jack pine stand makes an attractive setting for camping. The small size of Burnfield Lake makes it ideal for small boats. Safe sand beaches have been developed and maintained adjacent to the campgrounds.

Figure 1

Obatanga Provincial Park
Regional Setting



"To provide natural environment back country travel and camping opportunities."

A canoe route with campsites has been developed that connects the main park lakes (Burnfield, Obatanga, and Knife Lakes). The route continues outside the park area as well. The park lakes are on the Dog (University) River - a river that eventually flows to Lake Superior. This river is well known to wilderness canoeists as a rugged and difficult but very scenic river. The park is often used as a staging area for canoe trips down the Dog (University) River.

Heritage Appreciation

"To provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the natural and cultural environments through an interpretive programme."

Park visitors will have the opportunity to learn more about the park on their own through publications like the park leaflet, displays and trails like the popular Forest Fire interpretive trail.

Park staff, when available, may provide a variety of interpretive activities such as children's programs, conducted walks, amphitheatre programs and special events like the Blueberry Fest.

Tourism

"To provide Ontario residents and out of province visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the Province."

The park provides a convenient place to stop for day use or camping for people travelling along the Trans-Canada Highway along the north shore of Lake Superior.

The park can also be a destination for visitors wanting small lakes, good fishing and boating in a quiet boreal forest setting. During autumn and spring hunting seasons hunters use Crown land and park lands and camp in the area.

The 1982 camper survey results show that park campers spent $255,000 within 25 miles of the park.

The park staff will also continue to work with local and regional tourist associations and other parks to attract more visitors to the area.

2.4 PARK ZONING

The lands and waters within Obatanga Park have been zoned so that they may be allocated to their most appropriate use. There is an access zone, a development zone, a natural environment zone, and four nature reserve zones. (Figure 2). Detailed development and management policies for these zones can be found in **Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies.**

2.4.1 Access Zone (160 hectares)

Access zones serve as staging areas where minimum facilities support use of nature reserve zones and less developed natural environment zones.

Development will be limited to roads, visitor control structures, basic day use facilities, and orientation, interpretive, educational, research and management facilities.

The 30m wide access zone follows the Camp 1 logging access road through the west side of the park.

The road will be maintained to a minimum standard as long as the M.N.R. has resource management concerns west of the park boundary.

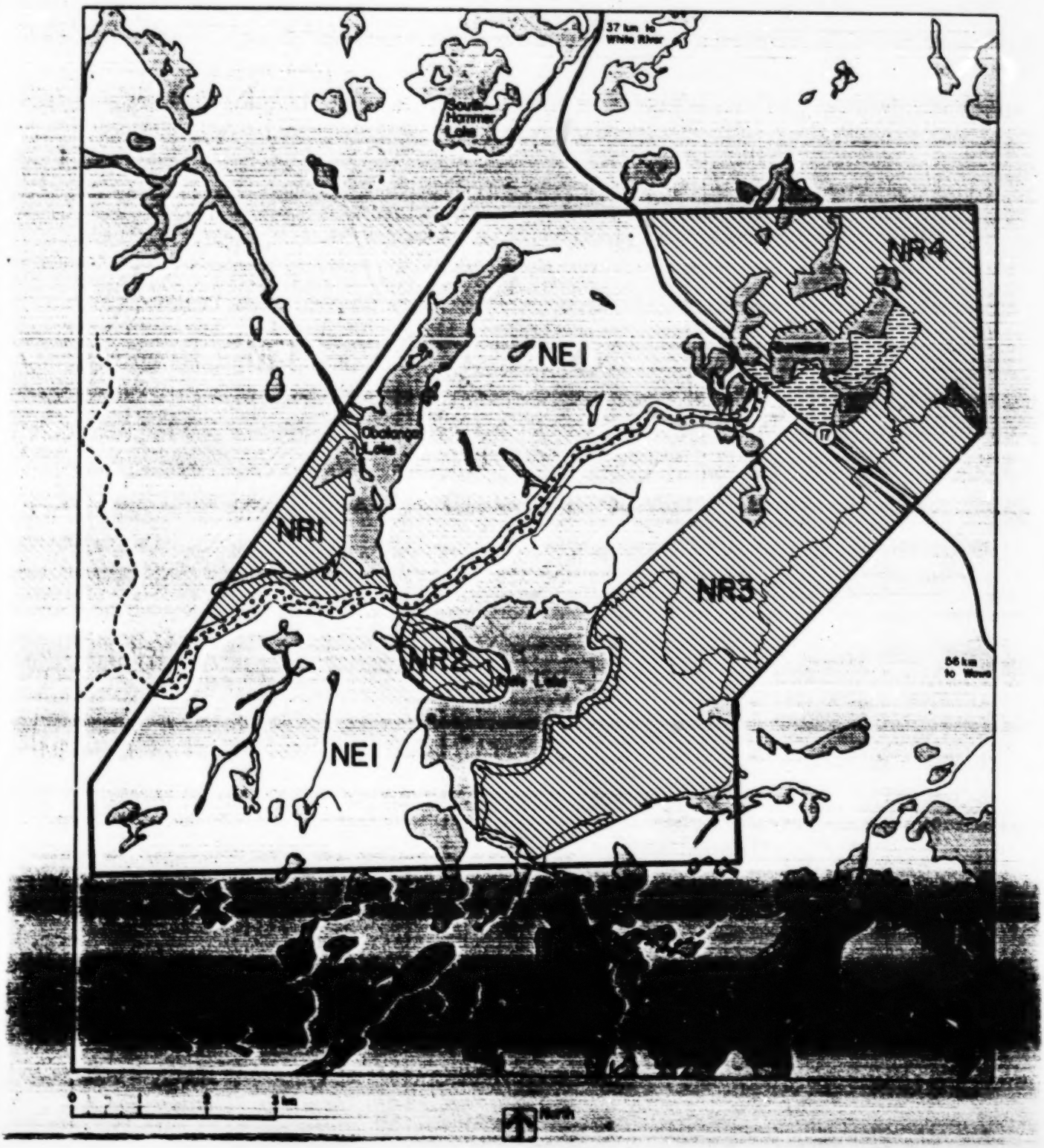
Facilities will be limited to serving interior users and day visitors using the interior of the park for boating, canoeing, fishing and other recreational activities.

A small parking area will be designated between Knife and Obatanga Lakes. No camping will be allowed at this site.

Figure 2

Zoning

- Park Boundary
- Nature Reserve Zone
- Natural Environment Zone
- Development Zone
- Access Zone



2.4.2 **Development Zone** (135 hectares)

The development zone provides the main access to the park and contains the facilities and services for intensive day use, camping and recreation activities.

Development may include roads; visitor control structures; day use facilities; car campgrounds basic commercial service facilities for visitors; and interpretive, education, research and management facilities.

Existing day use and camping facilities and any new facilities will be maintained at standards which will encourage natural enviornment based activities and provide for uncrowded conditions and relative freedom from intrusions of fellow recreationists.

2.4.3 **Natural Environment Zone** (5 912 hectare)

The natural environment zone includes attractive landscapes in which there is a minimum development required to support low intensity recreational activities.

Development will be limited to backcountry campsites, portage trails, necessary signs for route identification, minimal interpretive facilities, and similar simple facilities that will support low-intensity recreational activities.

2.4.4 **Nature Reserve Zones**

Nature reserve zones protect significant earth and life science features.

Development will be limited to trails, necessary signs, minimal interpretive facilities and temporary facilities for research and management. Portages, trails and signs necessary for back country travel will be permitted.

NR 1 Obatanga Lake (312 hectares)

Features of significance here include extensive shoreland and riparian wetlands and a beaded esker.

NR 2 Knife Lake (776 hectares)

This extensive wetland feature has developed between the existing and previous shorelines of Knife Lake. Along with a variety of wetland features is a sweet gale (Myrica gale) dominated wetland that may be the best example in the park system in Site Region 3E.

NR 3 Knife Creek (1 495 hectares)

The rugged terrain in the southern portion of this area is associated with the contact between granitic intrusives and a belt of metavolcanic and metasedimentary bedrock types. The irregular rounded hills of granitic bedrock support a mosaic pattern of jack pine barrens, clumps of pine and deciduous species and bare patches of bedrock.

To the north of these bedrock barrens is a lowland area associated with Knife Creek. A jack pine forest occurs on dry glaciofluvial sands that are an extension of those deposits found in the campground area.

NR 4 Gina Lake (1 323 hectares)

This zone is similar to the north part of NR 3. A jackpine forest, a number of clear water lakes, and lowlands are found in this area dominated by glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits.

3. **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The park will be managed in accordance with the general planning and management policies for natural environment class provincial parks. Specific directions are provided where needed to meet requirements at Obatanga Provincial Park.

Although the policies are presented separately, all planning and management will recognize that the components are interrelated and that an integrated approach will be required in order for the objectives of the park to be achieved.

The park operating plan will be updated as a result of this resource management planning.

3.1 **WATER**

Water quality will be monitored in accordance with Ministry of Natural Resources testing procedures. This will give park users reasonable protection from any hazards connected with contaminated drinking or bathing waters.

3.2 VEGETATION

Vegetation in the park will be managed to fulfill protection and recreation objectives. Management guidelines will be dervied from environmental management policies for Natural Environment parks.

The campgrounds are appealing to park visitors because of the location in a mature jackpine stand. A vegetation management plan will be prepared for this development zone. In it will be guidelines to:

1) Promote regeneration

2) Create more suitable buffer between campsites

3) remove hazardous trees

4) and to rehabilitate areas lacking in natural growth.

3.3 FISHERIES

Almost one half of all park visitors go fishing when staying in Obatanga Park. Over a dozen lakes are easily accessible and the fishing for walleye and northern pike is considered to be good.

The quality of sport fishing important to the park visitor's experience. Park staff will cooperate with Fish and Wildlife staff when a Wawa District Fisheries Management Plan is prepared. The plan will include special recognition of Obatanga Park and will also detail stocking requirements and guidelines for the management of natural populations in lakes of the park.

3.4 WILDLIFE

Opportunities for the viewing of wildlife will be encouraged. For example a wetlani viewing blind could be built south of the causeway on Burnfield Lake.

Hunting will continue to be allowed in the park because it has been a traditional use. The delayed opening of the fall hunting season and the early closing of the spring hunting season minimizes and conflicts between hunters and park visitors.

Existing registered traplines will be honoured.

Beavers occasionally cause park management problems by obstructing water drainage. Removal of animals that endanger the health and safety of park visitors will be allowed.

4. CLIENT SERVICES

4.1 VISITOR SERVICES

The Visitor Services program will provide visitors with an opportunity to gain an understanding, awareness and appreciation of Obatanga Provincial Park and its objectives, policies and heritage. This will be achieved through the policies for the following component of the Visitor Services program. Visitor Services planning will guide the best combination of these components to deliver this aspect of park operations.

4.1.1. Communications

Information concerning park resource management, facilities, programs and nearby points of interest will be available at key points throughout the park (park gatehouse, comfort station, etc.). Information will be made available in the form of the park leaflet information displays, special publications as required and through informed park staff.

4.1.2 Interpretation

The park interpretive program will create a greater awareness of natural and cultural values within the park and consists of the following themes:

.The Boreal - forest, fire, wetlands and animals.

.Glaciation and the Canadian Shield.

.Transportation - historic difficulties with travel.

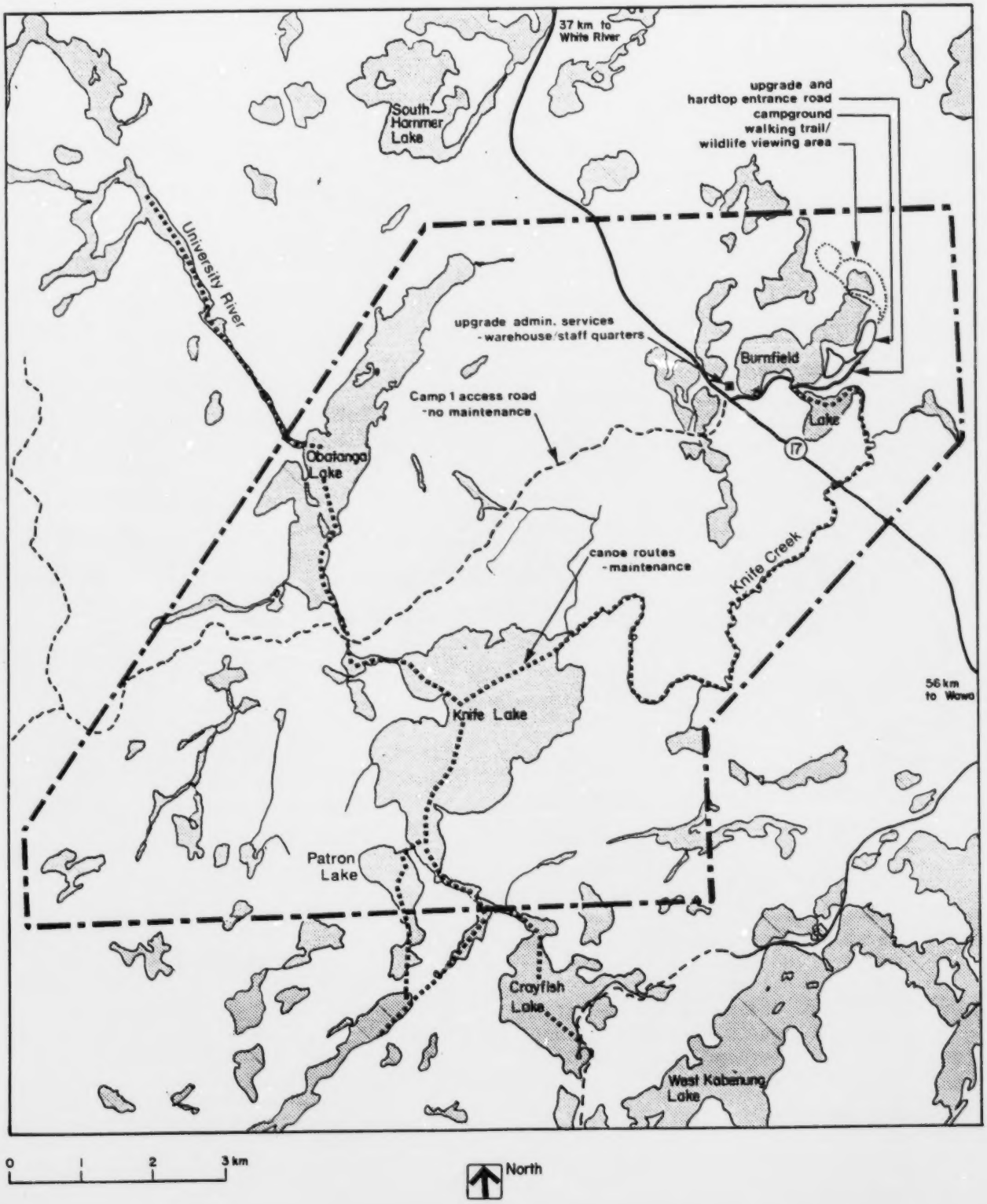
.Outdoor adventure - canoeing, fishing, and blueberry picking.

The interpretive program may include both self-use facilities and staff led activities. Self use facilities

Figure 3

Proposed Development

park boundary



include such things as the Forest Fire trail and guide, displays at the gatehouse and the Visitor Centre.

4.1.3 **Outdoor Recreation**

Outdoor recreation programming will provide information concerning water related activities such as boating safety, canoeing, fishing and water safety, and backcountry travel ethics like low impact camping.

4.1.4 **Research**

Research related to resource management will be encouraged. All research activity will follow the policies for research in Provincial Parks.

4.2 **MARKETING**

The park marketing plan will be updated to reflect the new initiates described in this section.

Campers find the park a convenient place to stop on their annual vacation. Only 12.2% of the campers make Obatanga their main destination.

Like other provincial parks on the Trans Canada Highway along Lake Superior, at least 90% of the visitors are on a vacation trip. Vacation traffic on highway 17 has been decreasing. However, tourist attractions have developed and more are being planned so that the north of Superior area will become more of a destination for vacation travellers.

The main park market will continue to be the highway 17 traveller. Park staff will continue to co-operate with the regional travel organizations to promote a series of attractions and services from Sault Ste. Marie to Thunder Bay. This would make the whole tourist region a destination. It would fit the current travel patterns of people visiting several destinations.

A park theme like "Boreal Wilderness" could be promoted in travel publications. This would give Obatanga a separate identity from other parks along highway 17.

A secondary market will be visitors who could make Obatanga a destination. Fishermen, novice wilderness canoeists and hunters will use the west side of the park (and adjacent land) as an "accessible" wilderness" area. Backcountry camping will accommodate some of these visitors. Others will stay in the park's campground, Crown Land adjacent to the Park or private sector outlets.

4.3 **BACKCOUNTRY RECREATION**

The large portion of park area outside of the campground will be available for day use and overnight backcountry travel.

Portages and roads will be available to access the park interior. For example, canoeists can access Gina Lake by portage from Burnfield Lake. Day trips into Knife and Patron Lakes can be started from the Kabenung Lake road south of the park.

Extended overnight backcountry trips can be based from interior campsites or by following the Obatanga Canoe Route. Canoe trips down the Dog (University) River can be started from the park.

This "accessible wilderness" complements the wilderness recreation opportunities in Pukaskwa National Park and Lake Superior Provincial Park by providing the option of day trips or overnight trips into less remote areas. This would be ideal for outdoor recreationists short of vacation time of for those who lack the experience for longer backcountry trips.

5. **DEVELOPMENT**

All development within Obatanga Park will reflect the standards for a Natural Environment Class Park (Figure 3). Development projects will be proposed through work program planning and special funding initiatives. All development will be carried out in accordance with approved site and development plans. Once the development takes place, it will be managed according to the operating plan for the park. The requirements for the Environmental Assessment Act will also be met.

5.1 **Car Camping Use**

Present trends in car camping use indicate that there is no need for additional car camping development. Existing facilities will be upgraded as required.

To reduce dust problems and maintenance problems on main park access road to the campgrounds should be hard topped.

5.2 Day Use

Existing use in the Burnfield Lake day use area for parking, swimming, picnicking, boat launching and washroom facilities will be monitored to ensure that use does not deteriorate the site.

Facilities and services will be upgraded as required.

5.3 Backcountry Use

To maintain a "wilderness" character development will be limited to portages, trails, and signs necessary for route identification.

The park area west of the highway will have 4 access routes: 1) via Hammer Lake, 2) Alice Creek, 3) Kabenung Lake Road, and 4) Camp 1 road. If the Camp 1 road is not maintained (see section 2.4.1) there is still alternative access to the park interior.

Additional interior campsites will be developed if required.

Interior camping will not be allowed on access roads.

5.4 OFFICE AND MAINTENANCE CENTRE

In order to maintain the existing level of service and improve park operation (e.g. traffic flows, safety of visitors), a new maintenance building, storage area, gas and oil storage and park office is needed. This new complex would be developed away from the existing staff accommodation area.

The staff accommodation facilities are also in need of replacement. The existing trailers should be replaced by a 10 person staff house with cooking facilities.

6. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The recommended phasing of development will be implemented with approval of the management plan. Annual work program planning will implement all phase one items over the course of this management plan. The phase two projects will be implemented through additional funding proposals. The park operating plan will reflect work program planning decisions and new development needs as they are implemented.

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The park operating plan will be updated as needed in two phases.

Phase One - work program planning

Resource Management

.a vegetation management plan

.park staff will provide assistance in preparation of a Fisheries Management Plan for Wawa District.

Client Services

.visitor services plan
.update Marketing Plan
.monitor backcountry recreation use on lakes in the park to determine future campsite development/management needs.

Phase Two - additional funding proposals

Site and Development Planning

.provide an upgraded park office and maintenance area by consolidating all related facilities in the area outside campground developments following an approved site and development plan.

.within this area provide a 10 person staff house following an approved site development plan.

.upgrade and hard top main park road following an approved site and development plan.

.walking trails and wildlife viewing area development.

6.2 PLAN REVIEW

This management plan will be reviewed within 10 years of its approval as needs arise. The policies herein have been designed to manage park resources and maintain program services for the next 20 years.

SELECT REFERENCES

KOR P.S.G. Earth Science Inventory Checksheet - Obatanga Provincial Park (1977)

NOBLE T. Life Science Report for the Central Boreal Forest Region (3E) 1982

OMNR Wawa District Land Use Guidelines (1983)

OMNR Provincial Park Day User Survey Summary Statistical Report (1982)

OMNR Provincial Park Car Camper Survey Summary Statistical Report (1982)

OMNR Obatanga Provincial Park Marketing Plan (1980)